Create Depth with Layering

One of the most useful tips for taking more dynamic photos is having depth in your image. And in order to have depth you need to have many layers that can be both in-front and behind your subject. I think one reason that many people fall in love with the look produced by fast prime lenses is because they make everything behind your image incredibly out of focus, creating a background layer that is less distracting and really focuses your image on your subject. And while this is one way of layering, there is much much more that can be done with layering and creative ways to produce really stunning images.

At a basic level, you have three layers in a single photo. Your foreground, which is the first layer(s) of your image, your subject, which is typically the point that is in focus, and your background, everything behind your subject. Now, thats not to say you will always have all three, many times, you will only have your subject and background, sometimes, just one layer with a shallow depth of field that in its own way gives a certain amount of depth. Or you will have many foreground and background layers. Regardless, by having a certain amount of space between your subject the the world around them, you add layers.

Backgrounds and foregrounds are key to really fill your frame with interesting textures and colors that surround your subject. Depending on your lens and your settings, these layers can be incredibly soft and out of focus or more clear and part of your subjects world. What is most important when it comes to layering in your photos is to make sure you use the other layers to surround your subject and to really draw the attention to them. You want the other layers in someway to add to the story you are telling in your image. Sometimes, this will mean placing objects in-front of you subject like a chain link fence or positioning yourself or you subject to separate them from the background.

Adding depth to your image will really help make your images more dynamic and have that more professional look but make sure you pay attention to both your background and foreground, where does your subject best fit into this space and from what angle will all your layers work together to create a great photo.